

scapegoat just as the group may need to find a scapegoat in order to deal with tension” (Colman 1995, 5).

This was an interpretation of the »Jonah« sequence in the movie »Master and Commander«, directed by Peter Weir. Extreme situations, such as those presented in the »Jonah« sequence of the movie, provide an opportunity to discuss patterns of behavior within social systems. The “black and white” presentation, and the focus on a tiny, confined world of a ship in the middle of the sea, serve to concentrate the focus on the important aspects of the scene. In addition, the excellent display of emotion by renowned actors increases the chance that the audience will be emotionally touched by the presentation. This leads to the next point of this paper, which deals with how to transfer the artificial presentation into the training situation of the students and how to enable learning.

9.4 Learning by experience¹⁹ – an approach based on intervention science

The following arguments and conclusions are based on the perspective of intervention science (group dynamics).²⁰ Briefly, intervention science²¹ states that there is a benefit to self-reflection by individuals, groups, and social systems. The goal is self-awareness and thus a change from unconsciously biased to consciously chosen behavior. The advantage of self-awareness is that consciously chosen behavior is more adaptive, and affected individuals are better able to bear the decision they have made. Intervention science is primarily concerned with social processes, and focuses on individual, group, and organizational dynamics. Nonetheless, it uses transcendent knowledge, as well as reflection on immanent phenomena, to facilitate learning by experience. The design of a lecture on leadership is therefore a process based on the largely transcendent analysis of the »Jonah« film sequence and the facilitation of the reflection on largely immanent phenomena occurring within the lecture.

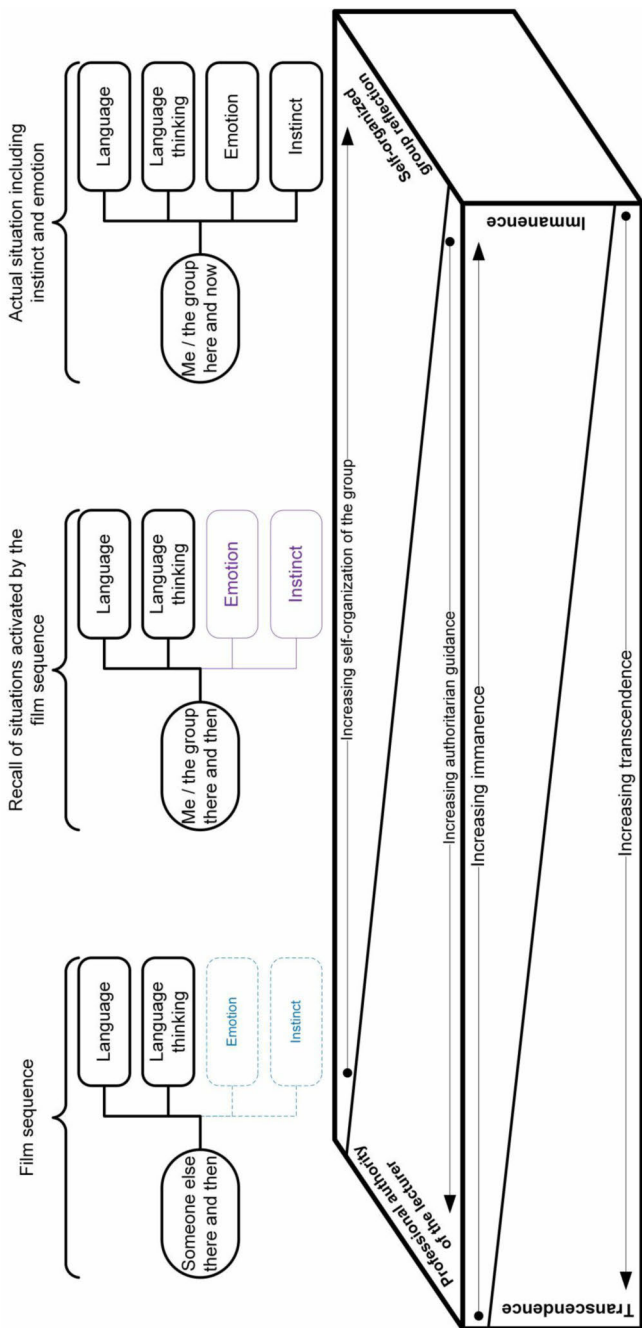
The analogue connection of transcendence and immanence is shown at the bottom of Figure 59. Although intervention science claims that neither a state of pure transcendence nor a state of pure immanence is possible, a distinction between transcendent relative to immanent states makes sense.

19 W. R. Bion discusses fundamental aspects regarding the importance of experiencing emotions and learning in the context of psychoanalysis in his book “Learning from Experience” (Bion 1962).

20 In this section, the terms “intervention science” and “group dynamics” are used synonymously.

21 See Part I.

Fig. 59: Distinctive states of transcendence relative to immanence during the lecture



Source: Schuster 2015, 226

For the purpose of explanation, a definition is given of three ideal types of distinctive states during the lecture (Figure 59), namely

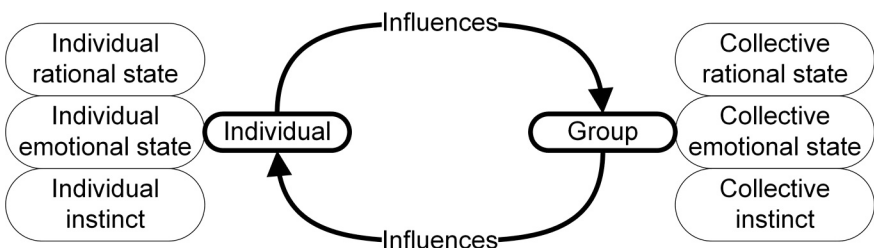
- the largely transcendent state “**someone else there and then**”
- the equally transcendent relative to the immanent state “**me/the group there and then**”
- the largely immanent state “**me/the group here and now**”.

Lewin emphasizes that the formalization of a language has a »freezing effect« (Lewin 2008a [1940], 187). This shows the disadvantage of putting something into specific words: in the moment it is done, it inevitably casts a shadow that hides the much more complex reality of immanent social processes. This leads directly to Krainz’s remark (Krainz 2011, 26–27, see also above)

“Rationality” in organizations is ... often nothing but a synonym for a certain discipline of speaking, thinking, calculating, and behaving, limited by taboos and prohibitions of speaking. ... What is labeled rational is, with respect to cognition, a matter of standpoint; seen socially, it is a matter of power or a question of the applicable standards and the problem of hidden taboos and prohibitions behind any rational explanation of organizational processes.

All specialization, as well as all culture itself, whether at the societal, organizational, or group level, can be seen as frozen human interactions that find their visible expression in language and language thinking. Lewin described the change of group norms by conducting the steps of “unfreezing, moving, and freezing” and showed the massive influence of group norms and culture on the individual and his or her ability to change (Lewin 2008b [1947], 330–332). In short, every individual within a group influences the group, and vice versa (Figure 60), and all of them are embedded in a larger matrix of culture.

Fig. 60: *The interdependence of the individual and the group*



Source: Schuster 2015, 226

This consideration focuses primarily on the interdependence of the individual and the group (Figure 60). It is very important to keep in mind that this also applies to the interdependence of the lecturer and the student group during the lecture.

Figure 60 also shows the analogue connection between the professional authority of the lecturer and the self-organized mode of a reflecting group (including the lecturer).

One aspect of the lecturer's role is its "frozen" status in the everyday life of universities. The advantage of a "frozen" status is that it reduces complexity; the disadvantage is that it is inert when it needs to be changed. Inevitably, students, especially in the early semesters, face the problem that it is almost impossible for them to assess the professional authority of the lecturer. His or her "frozen" status gives the lecturer a foothold by relying on the underlying prejudice that all the relevant knowledge is in his or her possession, or in other words, that he or she is omniscient. Therefore, the preconception of a lecturer's professional authority, whether it is true or not, is useful, perhaps even necessary, for the functioning of the teaching system in general, and of a lecture in particular. The lecturer decides when to end an ongoing discussion or dialogue, what the important details of the area being covered are, and where to place the focus of the lecture. The assumption is that the student will largely follow the lecturer's lead because of the "frozen" status of authority, rather than because the lecturer's decisions are the »right« ones based on the student's own professional judgment.

This leads to the second aspect of the lecturer's role, namely that of leader. From a psychodynamic point of view, the role of the leader puts every lecturer in the position of being a container for the anxieties of the students, whether he or she wants to be or not. This is partly analogous to the "doldrums" situation in the "Jonah" film scene discussed above. A question such as "Will you tell us what good leadership looks like?" could be an expression of anxiety, and therefore could be translated as "We students are unknowing and anxious about future situations as leaders, please give us hope and prepare us to cope with leadership." As argued above, it is necessary for a leader (lecturer) to distinguish between pacifying and explaining. Especially for lecturers, there may be a temptation to digress into explanations where pacifying would be the better choice, at least if the goal is to learn from the experience.

At this point, it is important to keep in mind that there are academic subjects that are largely transcendent and therefore require a completely different teaching and learning approach than those that are largely immanent. A technical process related to a blast furnace will depend mainly on the manipulation of temperatures, quantities of certain materials, and the passage of time, and is therefore largely transcendent. In this case, the main purpose is to teach students to submit to the »laws of nature«, such as melting points, gravity, and the times of chemical processes etc. Despite the enormous complexity of the whole process, there is not much room for discussion about the melting point of iron. In contrast, academic studies of leadership, because of the indeterminable nature of societies, must focus on largely immanent phenomena.²²

The adage "to walk the talk" emphasizes the need to be congruent in both speech and action. In the teaching situation, it is necessary to be congruent in verbal expression as well as in action for sufficient unambiguous understanding. In the case of largely transcendent, e.g., technical knowledge, the dominant actions of the lecturer and the keeping of the students in a subordinate position are congruent with being subordinated to the "laws of nature." In the case of largely immanent knowledge, e.g., leadership knowledge,

22 At least that is the perspective of intervention science.

the lecturer's behavior must vary from giving clear answers – and thus being dominant – and facilitating a group process, to (sometimes) renouncing domination, even if the students demand it. This is congruent with the fact that there is no detailed one-size-fits-all answer to »how to behave as a leader in a particular situation,« and that being a successful leader involves knowing oneself, being able to contain anxiety, reflecting on actual situations, and communicating with others. This necessarily means that a lecturer must make himself or herself vulnerable to students and open space for doubts about his or her professional authority.

The process of the lecture begins on the largely transcendent side with the »frozen« status of the lecturer's professional authority and the situation in the "Jonah" film scene, showing someone else there and then (Figure 59). The difficulty for the lecturer is to »unfreeze« this status and gradually lead the group into a self-organized group reflection in the here and now of the course setting. The reason for the difficulty presented here is the paradox that the "frozen" status is the very foundation for the lecturer that gives him or her the authority for this action, but it also has a very strong inertia that is beyond his or her control. The author's experience is that the moment the lecturer begins to reduce his or her dominance, either the group reclaims dominance from him or her, or a dominant student tries to fill the void of authority. The positive aspect of learning by experience is that everything that happens can be used for reflection. It is the art of the group-dynamic approach to work with what is happening in the "here and now" and thereby show students how to reflect on immanent phenomena. In general, the purpose of the lecture is to help the group to reflect on immanent phenomena using a transcendent knowledge of leadership, thus connecting abstract knowledge with concrete experience.

The presentation of the "Jonah" film scene and an interpretation therefore serves two purposes:

1. to provide a solid theoretical foundation and to demonstrate the professional authority of the lecturer (this is the "frozen" part that gives the lecturer his or her foundation) and
2. to serve as the nucleus for a process of group reflection (this is the unfreezing and moving part).

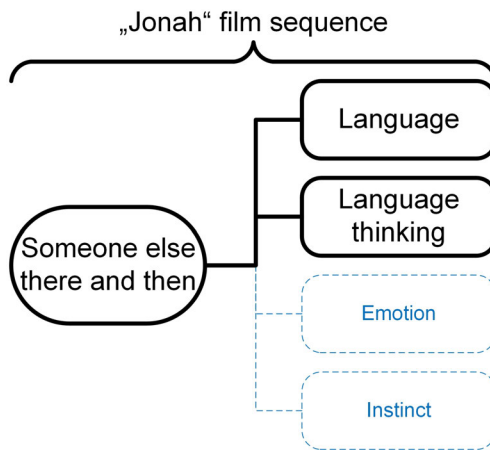
The primary purpose of the lecture is to use transcendent knowledge to create a group process that provides the experience from which students can learn. The advantage of transcendent knowledge is that it is in writing and therefore always available for review. In the best case scenario, the "Jonah" film scene and the transcendent psychodynamic knowledge about the scene serve as the nucleus for a process of group reflection on both recalled and actual situations within the group. This leads to the growing immanence of the lecture over time through the facilitation of a group process.

One aspect of transcendent knowledge is that the learning outcome for the student may only be to know some new verbal expressions or words, but not to be able to recognize similar situations in their lives, let alone to cope with these situations. Another aspect of transcendent knowledge is that a clear explanation is possible; it can give security and therefore have a pacifying effect. The teaching situation in which many laypersons,

namely the students, are confronted with only one expert in the field under discussion, namely the lecturer, reinforces this effect.

Since the focus of watching the »Jonah« film scene is on someone else there and then, spoken language and language thinking dominate. Spoken language and language thinking in general is a transcendent symbolic rationalization. There may be some empathy for the people in the movie, but the instinctive and emotional involvement of the individual student, as well as that of the group, is at a relative minimum (Figure 61).

Fig. 61: *The largely transcendent state*



Source: Schuster 2015, 229

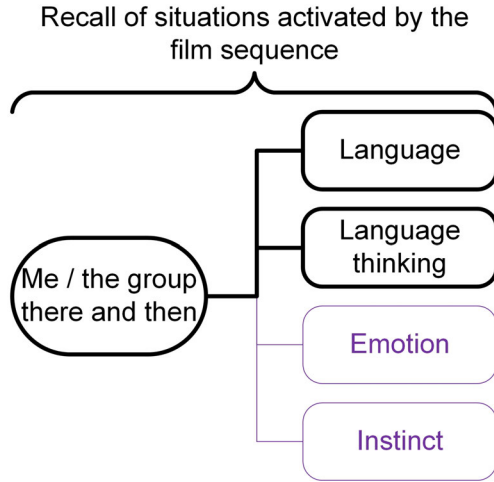
By asking the students if they can recall situations in their work context where they recognize that there was a scapegoat, the lecturer begins the group's journey into immanent reflection. If the group of students in the lecture is one that already has some common work experience, it may be that parts of the group, or the group as a whole, will be able to recall common situations in which there was a »scapegoat.« This leads to the ideal type of the equally transcendent relative to immanent state (Figure 62), where either an individual student, parts of the group, or the whole group has had a direct experience of a "scapegoat" situation "there and then."

The stories told by the students are conveyed in spoken language and are therefore still a transcendent symbolic rationalization. Nonetheless, the fact that the students are talking about something they have experienced leads to a relatively more instinctive and emotional involvement and, because of human sensitivity, to a stronger consternation of the group than the film scene could produce.

In this phase of the process, the lecturer must know how to moderate the group's growing consternation within limits that are sufficient to allow learning to take place, and sufficient to prevent a defensive reaction that is likely to inhibit learning. Since there are individual differences regarding "not enough" and "too much," the lecturer, in addition to observing the students' reactions, must always include the students' feedback by

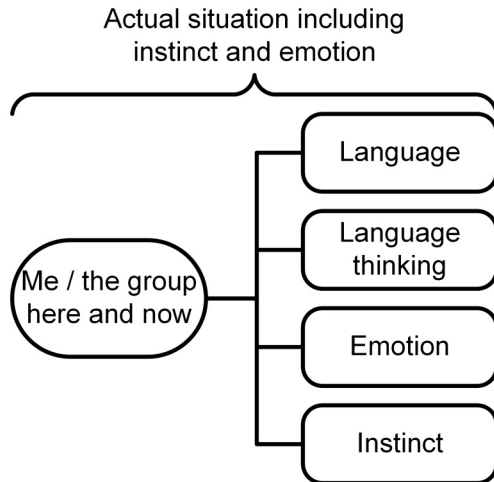
asking them if they still feel able to cope with the situation. The immanent nature of such a process cannot be put into a more detailed transcendent explanation and still make rational sense.

Fig. 62: *The equally transcendent relative to the immanent state*



Source: Schuster 2015, 230

Fig. 63: *The largely immanent state*



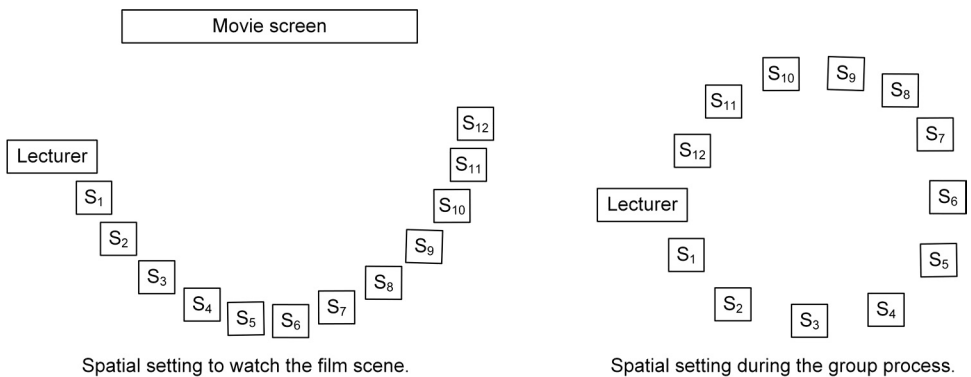
Source: Schuster 2015, 230

In the largely immanent state of confronting aspects of the situation “here and now” (Figure 63), the emotional and instinctive involvement of everyone in the group (including the lecturer) reaches a relative maximum. In this situation, communication is not so much about clear answers or definitions, but rather about dialoguing and exploring aspects of doubt, contradiction, and conflict.

In doing so, and being aware of it, there is an opportunity to gain a deep understanding of the complexity of human communication. In terms of leadership, the lecturer’s behavior should ultimately lead to the awareness of each individual in the group that there is no detailed answer to how to lead people, but rather that there remains within a person the ability to lead people well through one’s actual behavior and communication. The necessary condition for effective leadership is the leader’s connection to his or her own emotional and instinctual processes. In other words, the knowledge of how to reflect on immanent phenomena cannot be taught by speaking or writing,²³ but only by experiencing and reflecting on an actual process in the here and now. It is the responsibility of the lecturer to create the conditions for the group to experience its *here and now*.

The spatial setting is a crucial point for a successful group process. If learning by experience is to take place, a relative maximum of instinct and emotion must be involved in the process of reflection. The more each individual in the group can see the whole body of the other, the greater the likelihood that instinct and emotion will be involved in actual situations.²⁴ That is why, even in the situation of watching the movie, the spatial setting is a semicircle of chairs without any barrier-like tables in front of them. Therefore, everyone in the group can watch the movie and see everyone else at the same time (Figure 64).

Fig. 64: The spatial setting



Source: Schuster 2015, 231

When the movie scene is over, the spatial setting changes to a full circle of chairs, again without any barrier-like tables. From this setting, the lecturer begins to collect

23 In that case, it would immediately turn into transcendent knowledge.

24 A detailed consideration of this argumentation can be found in Levine 2010, 225–248.

questions from the students about the film scene. In the best case scenario, a dialogue should develop in which the lecturer brings in his or her psychodynamic expertise. At this stage of the process, it is very important for the lecturer not to get caught up in his or her expert role.

The continuum of transcendent relative to immanent states described above is not addressed within a sequential timeline, and there is no guarantee that the state of reflection on the here and now will even be reached. Rather, it is more a dance around the three ideal types, depending on the group, the lecturer, and the actual conditions. It is important for the lecturer to maintain a balance between providing a theoretical foundation and facilitating a group process; therefore, he or she must be a group dynamics specialist. There is no way to force the group to reflect on the here and now. The fundamental question about learning by experience is the quality of the experience itself. Assuming freedom of expression, it is exclusively up to the individual concerned to define the quality of an experience he or she has had. In addition to showing students how to reflect on immanent phenomena, the lecturer's task, as mentioned above, is to create the conditions for learning by experience.

9.5 Conclusion

This section describes a group-dynamic approach to teaching leadership based on intervention science. Beginning with the presentation of the "Jonah" sequence from the movie "Master and Commander" (Weir 2003), students are exposed to both a practical story and a theoretical psychodynamic interpretation. By providing an explanation of the film sequence rooted in psychodynamic concepts, the lecturer defines the context of the lecture. The film scene and the theoretical background form the basis for facilitating a reflective process within the group of students. The aim of the teaching process is to reach a reflection at the "me (individual student)/the group (of students) here-and-now" level regarding aspects of leadership. The advantage of the presented approach is seen in the connection of actual emotional experience with theoretical models of leadership. Theoretical models – such as the section on a psychodynamic view on leadership above – can be memorized without the need to deal with the situations described. Facilitating a group dynamic process, including emotions, creates the opportunity for students to become emotionally involved and feel what it means to be in a leadership or followership situation. Given that the perception of the stress level of a situation is to some extent individualized, this approach provides a great deal of room for individual learning and helps students develop individual coping strategies for complex future leadership situations. It also demonstrates the interdependence of individuals and groups, and increases students' ability to work from within to lead groups. Given the open-ended nature of the approach, there is ample room for further intervention research to monitor student development and the impact of the concepts discussed.